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ABSTRACT

This document, which is intended for staff of state occupational information coordinating committees (SOICCs) and career information delivery systems (CIDS), examines the pros and cons of career information hotlines and their use in selected states. "Foreword--Career Information on Call" (Juliette N. Lester) provides a brief overview of selected states' efforts to provide career information and lists benefits of CIDS hotlines. The hotlines can reach a broad spectrum of the public; offer users a degree of privacy and anonymity; help callers clarify their information needs; and are a cost-effective way of serving large and diverse populations. "Career Counseling by Telephone in Rhode Island" (Mildred T. Nichols) describes a model for using paraprofessional counselors to provide home-based adults (primarily women) with career counseling and information by telephone. "Fourteen Years and 42,000 Calls: Virginia's VIEW" (Carl McDaniels, Mary Anne Knoblock, Gale A. Watts, Mary Landon-Moore) details a comprehensive, multimedia state CIDS. "Starting a Career Information Hotline? Experiences and Insights from the Texas SOICC" (Caesar Andreas) discusses a career information hotline that focuses primarily on secondary school students, teachers, and counselors throughout Texas. A list of SOICC contacts for career information is appended. (Contains 15 references.) (MN)

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NOICC

National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee

NOICC Occasional Paper 7

Career Information Hotlines Sampler

Toward improving communication and coordination among developers and users of occupational, career, and labor market information

CE 080 449

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December 1994

NOICC Occasional Paper 7

Career Information Hotlines Sampler

Mildred T. Nichols, Rhode Island

Carl McDaniels, Mary Anne Knobloch, Gale A. Watts and Mary Landon-Moore, Virginia

Caesar Andreas, Texas

The NOICC/SOICC Network

The National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC) promotes the development and use of occupational, career, and labor market information. Established by Congress in 1976, it functions as a federal interagency coordinating committee. Its members represent ten agencies within the U.S. Departments of Labor, Education, Commerce, Agriculture, and Defense.

NOICC works with a network of State Occupational Information Coordinating Committees (SOICCs), also established by Congress in 1976, who play a similar role at the state level. SOICC members represent state vocational education boards, vocational rehabilitation agencies, employment security agencies, job training coordinating councils, economic development agencies, and representatives from higher education and other state agencies.

The work of the NOICC/SOICC Network is based on three integrated themes. The first concerns the development, delivery, and use of occupational, labor market, and career information. The second centers on the linkage of education and work through career development. The third involves training in the development, delivery, and use of data for planning, guidance, and career development purposes.

Because they form an integrated Network, representing a broad range of developers and users of occupational and labor market information and career development programs, NOICC and the SOICCs can foster coordination and communication in a systematic way. They work within a larger federal/state network, bringing together different federal and state efforts and programs. NOICC works with SOICCs and others in the broader network to develop various occupational information programs and systems. These are implemented by the SOICCs and used at the state and local levels. Some provide data to help in planning vocational education and job training programs. Others offer information for individuals who are exploring careers or making decisions about their future education and work. Still others address needs for training among professionals working with the information systems and career development.

Organizations and individuals undertaking special projects funded by the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee are encouraged to express their professional judgments. The analysis, interpretation, and opinions expressed in this document, therefore, do not necessarily represent the official position or policy of NOICC members or their representatives, or the NOICC staff, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

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Staff of state occupational information coordinating committees (SOICCs) and career information delivery systems (CIDS) in a number of other states also provided information on toll-free career information hotlines, or the lack of them, in their states. In particular, NOICC wishes to thank the following individuals: Dave Callum, Wisconsin; Hassan Chaharlang and Linda Piper, Indiana; Julie Roberts, Florida; Mark Schaff, Ohio; Larry Seidel, New Jersey; Mary Louise Simms, Alabama; Jan Staggs, Illinois; and Barbara Derwart and Harvey Ollis at NOICC.

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Foreword — Career Information on Call

A middle-aged man in an agitated state called Virginia VIEW's Career Information Hotline. He had recently been laid off from his job as a mechanical engineer and was seeking job leads. The Hotline operator gave him several job line phone numbers and trade association contacts and explained the services available to him from the Virginia Employment Commission, all of which were unfamiliar resources to him.

Laid off from a job he had held for the last 22 years and still unemployed after eight months, a caller from Richmond sought information about retraining as a tractor trailer truck driver. The Hotline operator referred him to two training programs within the state's community college system and several private training schools.

A mother in the Virginia Beach area, seeking an alternative means of educating her teenaged son, was referred to the Hotline by his school counselor. She was looking for military and religious schools. The Hotline operator provided her with numerous referrals from listings in the state education directory, information she had been unable to find elsewhere.

For individuals with questions like these, a toll-free career information hotline can supply quick and convenient assistance. For state and local leaders who are developing school-to-work transition systems or planning one-stop career centers, the toll-free hotline concept is worth considering as a central source of information and referral that is easily accessible to all citizens. Hence, we offer this sampler of successful state career information hotlines.

This occasional paper features hotlines in three states: Rhode Island, Texas, and Virginia. However, in preparing this paper, NOICC staff talked informally with several directors of other state occupational information coordinating committees (SOICCs) and state career information delivery systems (CIDS) who have operated toll-free hotlines in recent years. We asked about the costs and the benefits, the pro's and con's. We asked whether, in an age of electronic bulletin boards and e-mail, the telephone is still a viable system for delivering occupational and career information.

From these conversations, we learned that various types of career information and assistance are available by telephone from public or private agencies across the country. Some are operated by educational institutions or educational brokering services, others by state higher education or student assistance commissions. While some specialize in financial aid or educational programs available in a state, others offer a broader array of information. Indiana's College Placement and Assessment Center (ICPAC), for example, supplies secondary school students with a wealth of career and educational information

and support to encourage more students to pursue some kind of postsecondary education. The center uses specially tailored materials and scheduled mailings, a toll-free hotline, and an electronic bulletin board to link students, counselors, parents, and others with opportunities in education and provide help with career exploration and decision making, educational planning, financial aid, and study skills.

The ICPAC toll-free hotline has grown from about 600 calls its first year (1986) to 40,000 calls in the last fiscal year. As the number of callers has grown, the staff have developed materials that respond to newly identified needs. For example, when parents started asking for materials for themselves as well as for their children, ICPAC started developing career and educational planning resources for adults.

Some states are using electronic bulletin boards, e-mail, and other communications technology to give employers, training agencies, and other clients access to comprehensive labor market information systems. The Ohio employment service, for example, offers subscribers a full communications package and unlimited access to its extensive electronic database, a system they consider very effective for delivering occupational, career, and labor market information tailored to their individual users' needs.

Currently only a few SOICCs and CIDS operate toll-free career information hotlines. Alabama has hooked its CIDS computer to an 800-number so that residents in rural areas can dial up the computer and gain access to the CIDS toll-free. Some state CIDS, like Wisconsin and Florida, provide toll-free telephone numbers for local site staff to call when they need professional or technical support in using the system. However, CIDS staff caution that, if the number is advertised, it will attract numerous calls from individuals seeking career-related assistance.

New Jersey SOICC has maintained a toll-free occupational information hotline as a public service for eight years, although it has no extra funding to support it. Director Larry Seidel says that his SOICC staff are sufficiently trained and knowledgeable to handle most calls and referrals. However, the constant interruption of hotline calls can become a burden for a small staff with other responsibilities for the system. Has the SOICC considered disconnecting the toll-free line? "We can't," says Seidel. "Without it, the general public has no clue of where to call for career information. This gives them access to our state occupational and career information systems."

New Jersey's experience is reflected in the findings of hotline operators in Rhode Island, Texas, and Virginia. All refer to some common advantages of providing toll-free telephone access to occupational and career information. They also point out common pitfalls and problems, as well as practical advice for avoiding or addressing them. Some of the advantages are noted below.

- **A CIDS toll-free telephone hotline can reach a broad spectrum of the public.** Many adults who need career assistance do not know where to get it. Many do not have access to a computer, and even those who do may not feel comfortable using one. With telephones universally available, a hotline provides equal access to information and help.

- **Hotlines are convenient for users.** They do not need to arrange for child care, pay for transportation, or spend time getting to a physical facility. In Rhode Island, these were important advantages of offering career counseling by telephone appointment rather than face-to-face. Virginia has found that many callers just need the type of information that can be given quickly by telephone.

- **Hotlines offer users a degree of privacy and anonymity.** Many adults are shy about asking questions concerning jobs and training in person, but they feel comfortable doing so by telephone.

- **Callers can get help clarifying what they want or need to know.** As Mildred Nichols points out, sometimes the answer to a question turns into a crash course in career planning for the uninitiated or leads them to seek counseling and other assistance.

- **Hotlines can be a cost effective way of serving large and diverse populations** from a single, central office, using minimal staff. Two bilingual operators, for example, supply thousands of school counselors and students in all regions of Texas with career information requested through their hotline.

- **For SOICC or CIDS staff, hotlines provide a listening post** for staying in touch with their customers' perceptions, interests and needs. Staff get a sense of what occupations and training are appealing to job-seekers and what kinds of information the CIDS might consider including in its database to address consumer needs.

- **Hotlines can promote and support the use of career information and career development programs.** Callers usually get supplemental information by mail, and they are often referred to CIDS sites, employment services, or counseling resources available in their local area. The hotline can introduce them to an array of services and information they might otherwise have difficulty finding.

- **A hotline can give a public agency "a human face."** Last April the *Wall Street Journal* reported that, according to a 1992 study by the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals in Business, two-thirds of manufacturers now offer 1-800 numbers, up from 40 percent a decade ago. For many companies, maintaining a consumer hotline is costly but vital to keeping customers content with their products. They need a place to call when they have questions or problems. And they don't want to talk to a machine. Hotline operators in Virginia and Indiana report frequent instances where callers say they want to talk to a "live person" and are relieved and glad when one answers.

By the same token, **hotline staff must be helpful and qualified to help** or they can do more harm than good. They must have a sound command of the information base and the career development process. And they must enjoy helping people with problems. Staff must also have at their command a **comprehensive, up-to-date, and accurate information base.** This is critical for a successful hotline. However, as Carl McDaniels notes, it can be built up gradually as the hotline grows. The extensive resources Virginia Hotline operators now have at their fingertips are the fruit of years of experience. Indiana's ICPAC hotline also started small, acquiring and developing its information resources in response to their callers' needs.

Three Models

For this sampler, we selected three different models for a statewide career information hotline. All have had special funding to develop and operate a hotline. All were conceived as the most effective method of reaching target populations in their respective states. Rhode Island focused on home-based adults, Texas on secondary school students. In Virginia, the toll-free hotline was perceived as the best way to assure all Virginians equal and virtually free access to the state CIDS.

All of our models placed a high priority on assembling and maintaining a first-rate occupational and career information base. All developed complementary materials to address special needs of their clients and supplement information given by telephone. In 1972, when Rhode Island's efforts were launched, 800-numbers were not yet in widespread use, the pilot for the first statewide computer-based CIDS was just being developed, and career information materials for adults were scarce. When Virginia VIEW launched its hotline in 1980, 800-numbers had made rapid gains in popularity, and several state CIDS had been implemented. And by 1984, in a state the size of Texas, the humble telephone gave a far-flung population access to a sophisticated computerized career information delivery system.

In the first paper, Mildred Nichols, director of the Rhode Island SOICC, describes the early 1970s Career Education Project, a pioneer effort that had to create almost all its tools and resources — except the telephone. It developed and tested a model for providing home-based adults, primarily women, with career counseling and information by telephone, using paraprofessional counselors. When the pilot project ended in 1975, Rhode Island adapted the model to reach other target populations as well, and, for the next 12 years, operated a telephone-based Career Counseling Service. In 1987, with funds no longer available to support it, the Counseling Service closed. But the SOICC maintained the telephone line and continues to respond with information and referrals when people call for help.

Our second model is the Career Information Hotline operated by Virginia VIEW, a comprehensive, multimedia state CIDS. Carl McDaniels, Mary Anne Knobloch, Gale Watts, and Mary Landon-Moore discuss hotlines in general and give readers an inside view of how their Hotline provides a vital public information service. Among its special features is its use of internships to staff the Hotline with trained counselors enrolled in the counselor education program at Virginia Tech, where the Hotline is based. The authors stress the mutual benefits of this arrangement and of having a hotline as part of a larger career information delivery system. They also give readers practical tips and advice based on more than 14 years of experience in running a CIDS hotline.

While the Virginia Hotline mainly serves adults, the Texas Career Information Hotline focuses primarily on secondary school students, teachers, and counselors in all regions of the state. Providing comprehensive and current occupational and career information to more than a thousand school districts is no small task. Caesar Andreas, who manages the Texas Hotline, describes its growth over the past nine years and its efforts to promote and support the use of occupational and career information. He reports on recent innovations and efforts to improve efficiency and reduce costs. As he points out, the Texas Hotline has expanded the SOICC's scope and ability to serve a large and diverse population. Last year they responded to almost 25,000 calls.

Innovations in communications and information technology, including the telephone, raise exciting possibilities for the delivery of occupational and career information at a time when many public agencies are taking a fresh look at the services they provide. Those who are charged with preparing and improving America's workforce may well be asking anew the basic questions Rhode Island's Career Education Project posed in developing its service delivery model. At the top of the list then — and now — is "Who are the people to be served, and what are their needs?" After these and other fundamental questions have been answered, it is time to consider what technologies will be the most effective and efficient in delivering the appropriate information or services. We hope readers in the NOICC/SOICC Network and beyond will find the following papers stimulating and useful as we seek better ways of serving the public's needs for occupational and career information.

Juliette N. Lester
Executive Director

Career Counseling by Telephone in Rhode Island

Mildred T. Nichols

A Toll-Free Gift from Providence

In 1972, a pilot project to provide career education to home-based adults was launched in Providence, Rhode Island. Over the next 15 years, thousands of Rhode Island residents received a toll-free gift from Providence: career counseling and information by telephone. All they had to do was dial 272-0900, and they would reach someone who could help them with many aspects of career development, from self-assessment and career exploration to finding a job or the training needed to advance in a career.

The service was described as "wildly popular" and successful. But finding the funds to keep it operating was a constant challenge. Initially the telephone service delivery model was designed and tested under a 3-year, federally funded research and development project. But the hotline was in danger of being disconnected when the pilot project ended. Thus, in 1974, a group of Rhode Island agencies came together to determine whether the model could be adapted to offer an effective service on a smaller budget. They faced a challenge familiar to many public and non-profit agencies: how to sustain and institutionalize a successful and innovative program when the seed money for its development is gone.

Drawing on various funding sources and agency resources, Rhode Island downsized the model and kept the telephone counseling service operating successfully for more than a decade. In 1987, with funds no longer available to support it, the Rhode Island Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (RIOICC) reluctantly closed down the counseling service. RIOICC, however, did not disconnect the hotline number; the staff continued to respond with information and referrals when people called 272-0900 for help. And they still do.

With renewed public interest in career development and new federal initiatives to help the American workforce, many state and local agencies are taking a fresh look at how to meet the needs for employment and career information and counseling. The Rhode Island experience, described in the following pages, suggests that the telephone is still a delivery technology for policy makers to consider if they want to reach unemployed or underemployed adults from diverse backgrounds and regions.

The Home and Community Based Career Education Project, 1972-1975

Discovering the Needs of Home-Based Adults

In the early 1970s, services to help women move from unpaid work at home to the paid workplace were established in public, non-profit, and private organizations. Career education was added to the programs of many public schools. The federal government, through the National Institute of Education (NIE), funded four career education projects, including one in Providence, Rhode Island. The Career Education Project was a 3-year research and development program concerned exclusively with discovering and meeting the career-related needs of home-based adults. This population was defined as being 16 or older, neither in school full time nor working full time (Grothe, 1975).

The purpose of the project was to test a model of service delivery to a population that was considered to be hard to reach but likely to need help in adapting to a changing economy. The Education Development Center, Inc., of Newton, Massachusetts, under contract to NIE, had proposed a model for delivering services by telephone. It chose Rhode Island because, even in the 1970s, 96 percent of all households in the state had a telephone and 85 percent of the population was able to call a Providence number without toll charges. In addition, the communication facilities — newspapers, radio, and television — that would be needed to reach potential users were centralized, extensive, and accessible.

Rhode Island also met other criteria for a pilot site. A large number of educational and training institutions were available to accommodate new enrollees. The Rhode Island economy was changing, and the occupations the target population might have entered were disappearing. There was a well developed consciousness of the changing roles of women, who in Rhode Island had always been a larger part of the labor force than the national average. This combination of a potentially receptive audience, effective ways of reaching them, the availability of resources to meet needs, a changing economy, a national career education priority, and the existence of the Education Development Center gave Rhode Island a unique opportunity to test the new service delivery model.

Designing the Model

The staff that planned and designed the Career Counseling Service emphasized in their publication on the topic that the design of the service evolved rather than emerged whole. Any number of questions had to be raised during the system design phase. As the design evolved, more refined answers were produced to answer the fundamental question the

Career Education Project staff asked: "What kind of delivery system will respond efficiently and effectively to the needs of the target population?" (Grothe, 1975, p. 6). To answer this question, the staff asked more detailed questions:

- Who are the people to be served, and what are their needs?
- What other resources exist in the community?
- What are the goals of the service?
- What model of service delivery should be employed?
- What mix of staff and resources will be necessary to deliver services?

These are questions to which any service provider must find reasonable answers as they are embedded in the very nature of any complex human service.

The project was mandated not only to discover the career-related needs of the target group, but also to devise effective ways to meet them. Thus the Career Education Project's service delivery goal (Grothe, 1975, p. 7) was to help the users of the Career Counseling Service to:

- Acquire knowledge of expanding and alternative careers, as well as their educational and skill requirements.
- Develop the ability to assess their career interests and preparatory needs.
- Make career decisions.
- Plan and initiate educational or training efforts to prepare for a career.

The core of the delivery model was a telephone-based Career Counseling Service using trained paraprofessional counselors. The service was supported by a resource center, an information development unit, an outreach staff, and a research and evaluation unit. Around 40 trained paraprofessional counselors, professional supervisors, librarians, information specialists, social scientists, media experts, and clerical support staff were employed. Their mission was not only to help reach service and client goals, but also to design and test a new service delivery model for providing comprehensive career counseling and information over the telephone by paraprofessional counselors. The research methodology used and the findings and conclusions would have to meet acceptable standards for social science research.

The counselors were paraprofessionals with total responsibility, not aides or technicians assisting their professional supervisors. The number of paraprofessionals in the workforce had expanded greatly during the 1960s, and paraprofessional counselors were often employed by organizations delivering social services to women and minorities. However, there had been virtually no controlled research on the use of paraprofessional career counselors and the delivery of services by telephone. Again, the service designers had to raise the right questions and reach consensus on the answers.

Their questions addressed the respective roles and responsibilities of the paraprofessional and professional counselors. They considered how to reach the most extensive pool of potential applicants for the paraprofessional positions as well as the criteria for and methods of selecting staff. They also looked at the kinds of on-the-job, pre-service, and ongoing training and the supervision that would be needed to ensure effective delivery of services to clients and to supply data needed for research (Grothe, 1975, pp. 25-33).

The telephone was the primary service delivery mechanism. The decision to provide career counseling by telephone appointment, rather than use the traditional face-to-face model, was made after considering such factors as reduced costs to service users (by eliminating travel, child care, and other costs), convenience, relative anonymity, and wide access to the telephone. But basic questions had to be considered and answered. They concerned the nature of the service-client interaction, how clients would enter and leave the system, whether or not the telephone would be an effective medium for client-counselor interaction, and whether or not paraprofessionals could deliver career counseling services effectively by telephone (Grothe, 1975, pp. 4, 8).

As with any broad question, many more detailed questions were generated before specific methods and procedures could be developed that would result in the proofs to answer the broad-based questions. Many of the detailed questions and the resulting procedures and tools were related to the caller's use of the service. These tools included the intake interview protocol, the initial counseling interview protocol, the record of subsequent counseling sessions and information calls, and forms recording the formal exit status.

Building a Database

Responding in a clear, concise, and understandable manner to career information requests over the telephone requires a comprehensive, well organized career information database. A large career resource center library was assembled. Gaps in career information materials for adults were identified. Materials had to be created. To insure a rapid response, the information specialists developed three categories of materials (Wilson, 1975):

- Directories covering educational and training resources, employment projections and supportive services
- General instructional materials outlining the career development process and reinforcing counseling sessions
- Special pieces meeting the particular needs of women, people holding or considering a liberal arts degree, and those wishing to pursue postsecondary education in a non-traditional manner

The directories were especially useful in responding to information requests and in providing information during the counseling sessions. The instructional materials and the special pieces were generally mailed to callers or used at the resource center. They addressed a range of pertinent issues and obstacles clients faced and offered guidance in exploring job and career opportunities. The information staff's final publication, *Developing Career-Related Materials for Use with and by Adults*, covers such topics as the process for creating materials and instructions for developing the specific products, such as the directories.

The outreach staff planned and carried out an extensive public awareness campaign to introduce the counseling service to potential users, major decision makers, community leaders, and other influencers of public opinion. The research and evaluation staff devised a strategy and developed the methodology for measuring who was using the service at any given time and for assessing and evaluating its effectiveness. A number of forms were developed to aid counselors in recording their interviews and keeping track of telephone counseling appointments and follow-up.

Diverse Users, Common Needs

During three years of offering services to home-based adults, the Career Education Project served nearly 5,000 persons. It found them to be a mostly female, but very heterogeneous, group. They ranged in age from 16 to 75, with the majority between 22 and 49 years of age. Eighty percent were not working at the time they telephoned the service, and the other 20 percent were working part time. Slightly more than 50 percent had completed high school. Just under 20 percent had college degrees and about 20 percent were high school dropouts. About one third of the service users had family incomes of less than $5,000, another third between $5,000 and $10,000, and the rest over $10,000 in 1972 dollars.

Nevertheless, this diverse group shared a common barrier to their career development: they had virtually no access to comprehensive guidance services. They were also united

in having expressed similar needs. The Career Education Project identified their needs in this way (Grothe, 1975, p. 1):

- A better understanding of their own interests, abilities, values, and goals.
- Facts about career trends, opportunities, and requirements.
- Information about the available educational and skill training opportunities.
- Information about sources of help in such related problem areas as financial support, discrimination, child care, and testing.
- Help in developing and implementing career plans.

A "Wildly Popular" Service, 1975-1987

Downsizing the Model

The positive experience with the telephone-based service delivery model led to the creation of a multi-agency task force to study the feasibility of adapting it and continuing the services it offered. This task force spent a year examining the model and the need for such a service. From the beginning, all involved understood that the amount of money available to run the service would be far less than had been available during the research and development phase.

The task force report on the adaptation of the Career Education Project model cites the need for a career counseling agency to "facilitate individuals' efforts to meet the challenges of the modern world of work and provide the state with a service which can enhance its economic development efforts" (*Career Counseling for Adults in Rhode Island*, 1974, p. 4).

Declaring that the need for a career counseling agency was the result of both the "historical evolution of the work world and the particular economic position in which Rhode Island currently finds itself," (p. 4) the report cites nearly a dozen reasons why the agency was needed (pp. 4, 5 & 21):

(1) An increasingly complex labor market.

(2) Higher levels of worker alienation, frustration and turnover, especially in industries involving repetitive tasks and unstable employment opportunities.

(3) Increasing numbers of adults will find the personal satisfaction, economic rewards and full-time career opportunities of their employment inadequate, necessitating a change in work and the selection of a new occupation among a diverse range of available opportunities.

(4) Data from the Rhode Island Health Study (1969) revealed "that a large percentage of the Rhode Island population is (was) especially vulnerable to these developments," thus indicating a very large number of potential service users.

(5) Career counseling and career education have been advocated by many as ways to help individuals respond to their need to survive and succeed in the work world.

(6) A survey of five major Rhode Island agencies offering some career-related counseling to determine where people with career-related problems can go for help and what kind of services are provided by these agencies found that career counseling is auxiliary or secondary to other services, the range of clients served is very narrow and access to the service is contingent on enrollment in some training program or other type of institutional affiliation.

(7) There is no readily accessible agency with open access to any adult in the state in which the primary emphasis is on career counseling and in which the elements necessary for effective career counseling are adequately developed.

(8) The experience of the Career Education Project demonstrated the demand for a permanent service.

(9) A Rhode Island Department of Education Vocational Education Survey of students, parents, educators and business and labor representatives showed overwhelming (91%) support for "out of school career information and counseling centers . . . available to all citizens."

The fundamental question was how the various elements of the career information and counseling model developed and tested by the Career Education Project could be adapted to serve all adults. Looked at closely, this question included a series of questions about goals and values of such a service, the populations to be served, the service delivery model, the costs, and sponsoring governance and funding.

Each of these broad areas included its own set of detailed questions to be answered to the satisfaction of the task force. For example, questions about the service delivery model were designed to determine who the potential users might be; what populations were a priority; what their needs were and how they would be determined; what client services the agency would provide; what mix of staff the service would require; what qualifications, personal characteristics, and competencies the staff should possess; how

staff would be selected and trained; and what technologies would be used to deliver services (*Career Counseling for Adults in Rhode Island*, 1974, pp. 16-25, 37 & 45).

In answering the question regarding client services to be provided, the task force arrived at most of the same conclusions that resulted in the Career Education Project model. That is, career information should be provided; referrals to agencies that provide job placement, job training, supportive services, and education should be made; and in-depth career counseling should be provided to those who needed it.

These client services would be delivered using a modified Career Education Project model, with a much smaller staff. The resource center and the information unit would be combined and downsized. The research and development design unit would be eliminated, but vital statistics would be kept on users and outcomes.

There was one minor shift in emphasis. The task force proposed that advocacy services be strengthened by adding activities beyond traditional support for the client at the time of referral and at follow-up. These suggested activities included compiling assessments of client experiences with agencies, evaluating them, and encouraging the improvement and development of programs as needed by clients. When it came time to fund the service, these activities were not included in the operational model.

The re-modeled telephone Career Counseling Service operated successfully for the next 12 years. No longer embedded within a research and development project, it was strictly service delivery, supported by vocational education and employment and training funds. Gone were the research, design, and related staff. A core counseling service staff maintained the model that had been developed. Three years of research and independent investigation had proved that model was effective and efficient.

Placed first under the direction of the Rhode Island Department of Education and then under RIOICC at its formation, the new Career Counseling Service included counseling and a resource center. A staff of eight, in later years reduced to five, was responsible for career counseling, information development, record keeping, and outreach. The career counselors provided telephone-based career counseling, information, and referral. The career resource center librarian operated the library and developed and compiled information to maintain the three types of directories. Intake clerks compiled data on service users. Outreach and publicity were the responsibility of the director.

Who Called?

Between 1975 and 1987, approximately 1,700 persons a year called for services. The number of interactions (i.e., information calls, multiple counseling sessions, and

workshops) averaged around 2,800 a year. The number of male users increased to just over 32 percent on average, up from the 20 percent average during the pilot project. Fifty-four percent of all callers were unemployed and 46 percent were employed either part time or full time. The percent of callers who were high school dropouts declined to 13 percent, down from the 20 percent of the pilot years. The percent of high school graduates remained stable at 51 percent. Persons with postsecondary education accounted for 36 percent of the users. Members of minority groups accounted for about 9 percent of all Career Counseling Service users. (The Rhode Island minority population totaled 3.3 percent in the 1970 census, 5 percent in the 1980 census, and 9.6 percent in the 1990 census.)

These users called the Career Counseling Service to choose a career (49 percent), for job search assistance (19 percent), to overcome barriers and obstacles (5 percent), to choose a school or training program (18 percent), or for career information (10 percent). (Rounding brings the total to over 100 percent.)[1]

Call and Response, 1987-1994

The Career Counseling Service closed in 1987. Since that time, RIOICC has continued to receive 250 to 300 calls a year for career-related information, although it cannot be said to have a telephone hotline. The service today is more passive. With no hotline staff to handle calls, there is no publicity or outreach to attract them.

Nonetheless, because the Career Counseling Service was a component of RIOICC for nine years and the 272-0900 number remains in service, private individuals and employees of other agencies have continued to call for information and referral. Some of the calls still come in on the 272-0900 line. Others come in on the number for RIOICC's office, which has become known over time as a place to call for career and occupational information.

Because RIOICC has a resource center library and is responsible for the state occupational and career information systems, its staff have the capacity to answer these calls. That capacity is also a by-product of producing publications such as the *Rhode Island Handbook of Licensed, Certified and Registered Occupations*, the *Rhode Island Career Anchor*, and *Worker Training and Retraining in Rhode Island: What Some Employers Are Saying*.

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[1] All data are from office records.

While data on characteristics of callers are no longer collected, the callers can be grouped into two categories. Some are individuals asking questions for their own benefit, while others are employees asking for a piece of information they need in working with their clients or customers. These intermediaries are most often from government or non-profit agencies. Some, however, are from private sector businesses, often rehabilitation firms or human resource departments.

On occasion, representatives of organizations are not attempting to solve an immediate and specific individual problem, but are seeking a broad base of information, such as occupational supply and demand. Because the data requested are more extensive, such calls are likely to require sending a computer printout or a disk containing one or more computer systems, such as the Rhode Island Occupational Information System or the State Training Inventory. Callers from agencies that have these systems are encouraged to use them. Other private firms are more likely to call for wage data than for any other information.

The individuals who call for their own benefit represent a wide range, from relatively uneducated and unskilled to highly skilled with advanced degrees. Each has the same need for career information. Some, especially the more highly qualified, are moving to Rhode Island or adjacent Massachusetts from some other part of the country, and want information about local employment opportunities or licensing requirements.

Some callers are planning to start or change careers, and are interested in entrance requirements and training opportunities for a specific occupation or group of occupations. Other callers are seeking help in obtaining jobs. They call because they hope job placement assistance might be available or that RIOICC will have job openings information. They welcome referrals to appropriate agencies and accept suggestions of titles of books on the job search process that they might use.

Conclusion: What Rhode Island Learned

The career information needs of individuals and those who assist them do not change. The Rhode Island experience of nearly a quarter century of delivering career information by telephone shows that people from diverse backgrounds and levels of education will pick up the phone and call for career information.

The Rhode Island experience also shows that making the public aware of the service is vital and likely to involve substantial start-up costs. However, once a service is known, the cost of outreach and publicity can be greatly reduced. Publicity and outreach can be used to regulate the flow of calls. In addition, once a service is known, calls will

continue without outreach and publicity as long as other products and services help keep the hotline number in the public mind.

Before the public is invited to come and be served career information, the entity providing the service must have the necessary resources. A first rate database is critical. A resource center library is essential. Competent and knowledgeable staff, with excellent listening and analytical skills and a pleasant and professional manner, are a basic requirement. In addition to having information on hand to answer calls, they must enjoy serving the public and have knowledge of the career development process.

One thing learned from the Rhode Island experience is that a need for service will not result in a funding priority. Funding priorities change. In the Rhode Island case, funds that have been available over the years have been from federally funded programs. As policies governing those programs have changed, so has the availability of funds for a hotline.

Does the telephone hotline have a future? Probably. In terms of policy regarding the seamless delivery of career, occupational, and labor market information to career decision makers, the telephone, in all its end of the 20th century permutations, is still a delivery technology for policy makers to consider. For many callers, the answer to the first question leads to another one. In such instances, a qualified person on the other end of the line beats the most comprehensive and accessible computer database. Even after everybody begins cruising the career information highway from the privacy of home or decides to stop in at the nearest mall to use the touch screen, they may still want that crash course in career planning that an answer to a career information question sometimes becomes.

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Fourteen Years and 42,000 Calls: Virginia's VIEW

Carl McDaniels, Mary Anne Knobloch,
Gale A. Watts, and Mary Landon-Moore

Since 1980, more than 42,000 callers have sought help from the toll-free Career Information Hotline operated by Virginia VIEW, the statewide career information delivery system (CIDS). The Hotline — a vital part of the Virginia CIDS — is open to callers from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, except for state holidays. The cost of the system is underwritten by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act Amendments of 1990. The system is contracted to Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (better known as Virginia Tech) in Blacksburg.

A Systematic Approach

Virginia VIEW is a comprehensive, multimedia CIDS. Over the past 14 years, its staff have researched, developed, and delivered career information via printed materials, microfiche, computer software programs, various newspaper tabloids, and the toll-free Hotline. The multimedia format enables the CIDS to address the needs of students and other clients in a wide variety of locations and facilities. In 1994, VIEW served more than 1,500 sites across the state. The majority are found in public and private educational institutions, ranging from elementary schools to 4-year colleges. A substantial number of sites are located in state social service, rehabilitation, and employment security agencies, and in public job training programs. Others are based in libraries, community agencies, private counseling facilities, hospitals, and correctional institutions.

Each year these sites receive up-to-date VIEW materials, many of them tailored to particular users. For example, VIEW staff developed a special tabloid to help with the transition from military to civilian careers in answer to the downsizing in Virginia's many armed services posts. The system incorporates information from numerous national, state, and local data sources, including the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Virginia Employment Commission, four state departments (Education, Labor and Industry, Rehabilitative Services, and Professional and Occupational Regulation), the Virginia State Council of Higher Education, and various other sources.

Public Access

The VIEW Hotline (1-800/542-5870 in Virginia) was originally envisioned as that part of the CIDS that would be available without charge to anyone living anywhere in Virginia. It would serve people who did not have access to computers; all they needed was access to a telephone. It would offer help with questions that a tabloid or a computerized CIDS might not be able to answer. Over time it has also become VIEW's window on Virginia's labor market and the concerns of people in it. In the course of searching for answers and preparing materials to respond to callers' questions, staff have expanded and enriched the information resources of the CIDS.

Today the Hotline is staffed with two 20-hour-per-week graduate assistants in counseling. Virginia VIEW's full-time employees provide additional support. The affiliation with Virginia Tech, which has a strong counselor education program, allows the CIDS to enlist trained counselors to serve as Hotline operators while they are in full-time graduate study. The university affiliation creates a win-win situation for both the CIDS and the university. The university provides a talent pool of potential Hotline counselors for the CIDS, which, in turn, offers the students valuable experience working with career information. Because of that experience, the university's graduate counselors often use CIDS information in their practices and inform others about its importance. Many veteran Hotline operators, who are former Virginia Tech graduate students, say the experience they obtained while working on the Hotline has served them well in their varied career paths (personal interviews with former Hotline operators, 1994).

The Hotline relies on information collected for other CIDS resources to answer most of its calls. Hotline operators are trained to use the basic Virginia VIEW system and supplementary resources such as *Peterson's Guides, Index of Majors, Trade and Professional Association Directory*, and many Virginia-specific sources. Experienced staff train the graduate assistants in proper information dispensing and telephone techniques. A training manual also is available. Hotline supervisors regularly evaluate its effectiveness.

Information, Please

When it was established, the Hotline's mission was to offer all Virginians access to the most up-to-date and accurate career information possible; to be available as a referral source to Virginia's career counselors and helping professionals; and to be a source of answers to difficult, sometimes esoteric, questions as well as the more routine career information inquiries (Snipes & McDaniels, 1982). Today Hotline staff provide technical assistance to CIDS site operators and other professionals using career information in their work. They also handle a wide variety of questions from consumers. Some of the more unusual inquiries are noted below.

How can I help my daughter, who has some experience as a riverboat navigator on the Potomac River, get her license to navigate a boat on the Mississippi River?

How do I become a cryptographist?

Where can I learn to make and repair lutes?

How can I get a job designing computer games?

I am going to spend my summer in Canada with my Dad. Do they have a minimum wage?

If I got a degree in biochemistry, what could I do with it?

Where could I go to culinary arts school?

Is there a compilation of all jobs open in my town, city or county?

Where can I train to be a clown?

I want to be a farrier. Are there any schools in Virginia?

In an era of computer-assisted information delivery, the Virginia Hotline remains popular. Evaluations over its lifetime indicate the vast majority of callers have found the service of help, with the majority finding it very helpful. One reason for this may be that staff are trained to answer questions quickly and efficiently. Most calls take only a few minutes; many can be handled in five minutes or less. Most questions are answered immediately. If a question requires some research, callers are asked to call back later that day or the next one to give staff time to find the information they need. Operators also are skilled in referring clients to appropriate local sources.

Callers may receive additional resources, such as bibliographies on various subjects (job search, financial aid, temporary work, and international employment) and copies of *The Virginia VIEW Career Hunt*, a 56-page tabloid containing local, state, and national career information. These resources are especially important to adults who seldom know where to find or have ready access to career information in their communities. Virginia VIEW staff can answer their immediate inquiries, send them appropriate materials, and refer them to local sites that may be of help. Staff know how to guide callers to the next logical step in seeking answers to their career inquiries. They report that, increasingly, callers seem grateful to reach a human being who can deal with their specific questions and needs, rather than voice mail with broad answers to general inquiries.

Telephone Service Delivery

Toll-free telephone numbers have been popular since their inception in the late 1960s. During the first year, more than seven million calls were made on just 650 800-numbers. By 1992, calls were tallied in *billions*, to more than a *million* 800-numbers, on one network alone (Quintanilla & Gibson, 1994).

Creative marketing of goods and services have made 800-numbers nearly commonplace. Consumers can send a friend a teddy bear, flowers, or an assortment of perfume. People no longer have to travel to the sea to enjoy a clambake. All they have to do is to dial the Boston and Maine Fish Company's 800-number. Items such as leather goods, peanuts, wallpaper, and window treatments are but a toll-free call away. Eight-hundred-numbers are now the coin of the realm in how people get and exchange information . . . except *career* information.

Other Hotlines

In the past 20 years, hotlines have addressed a wide array of public concerns. Toll-free lines focusing on auto safety, droughts, runaways, asbestos, and child abuse affirm the popularity of obtaining information via the telephone (Snipes & McDaniels, 1982).

The use of 800-numbers appears to be accelerating and further diversifying in the 1990s. Parents are now encouraged to become more involved in their children's education by contacting the dial-a-teacher assistance program (Warner, 1991). Homework hotlines are popular as a means of helping latch-key children complete their assignments before their parents get home from work (Moskowitz, 1988). Mainstreamed and mildly handicapped students benefit from the Extraordinary HOMEwork Line. It enables them to complete tasks at home that otherwise would have had to be done in school. These children experience pride as they are helped to complete tasks for themselves (Ruffin, Lambert, & Kerr, 1985).

Special interest and educational groups have found hotlines to be effective. Anti-poachers (Izaak Walton League, 1992), Ex-Smokers (Shiffman, 1984) and Grammarians (Neulib & Scharton, 1982) operate hotlines to inform and educate the public. Another use for the hotline concept is the ability to set up a network for technical assistance for specific industries. For example, New York State established a statewide line to assist small business owners in the apparel and textile industry (Hester & McDowell, 1987).

An Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) hotline has proved to be a practical method of answering questions about AIDS because it assures caller privacy (Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc., 1989). Suicide prevention and crisis hotlines

have long held that maintaining privacy ensures that callers will use their services (Rosenthal, 1988).

It is now possible to obtain therapy by telephone through a charged 900-number. Ross Goldstein, a Harvard trained psychologist and entrepreneur, has recruited over 300 licensed psychologists, social workers, and marriage and family therapists to help clients concentrate on solution-based counseling. Unlike most crisis hotlines, which are staffed by volunteers and offer free assistance, these sessions can cost up to $30 for a 15-minute session. Professional reaction to this type of service delivery is mixed. Some supporters contend that some consumers may avail themselves of this service whereas they would not go to a mental health helping professional. Critics surmise that the public may be "ripped off" by those therapists who give premature advice or keep the client on the line too long (Peterson, 1993).

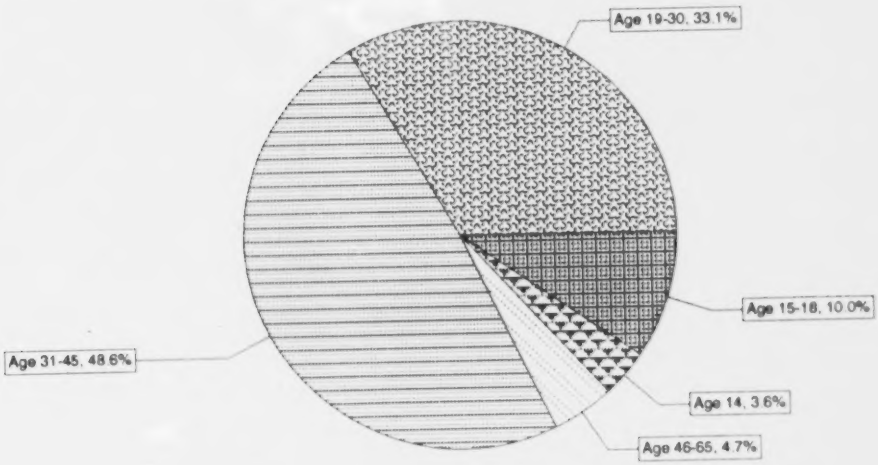
When the public has an opportunity to talk for free with experts about career-related issues, the response can be overwhelming. For example, when *USA Today* (December 7, 1993) ran a toll-free number in the fall of 1993 to a hotline staffed with financial aid experts from the nation's colleges and universities, they answered 4,000 calls. But they were forced to leave another 8,000 calls unanswered because of the success of this brief service.

Hotline Benefits

Some state CIDS have toll-free telephone lines to provide technical and professional assistance to staff operating CIDS sites, but only a few systems offer career information hotlines for the general public (Hopkins, Kinnison, Morgenthau, & Ollis, 1992). Those who do have found them especially useful in reaching segments of the public who otherwise might have difficulty obtaining information they need.

Virginia VIEW's experience corroborates this and other advantages of toll-free hotlines. Its Hotline serves out-of-school adults, mostly between 19 and 45 years of age, with few connections to schools and agencies (see Figure 1). Many of them do not know about or have easy access to a computerized CIDS. Frequently they are calling for information on behalf of someone else. Mothers call for children, grandparents call for grandchildren, and wives call for husbands. Most of them call from home. The telephone offers them convenient and timely access to information available through the state CIDS.

Figure 1: Ages of Callers to Virginia's Hotline



Almost 82 percent of *all* callers are between 19 and 45 years of age.

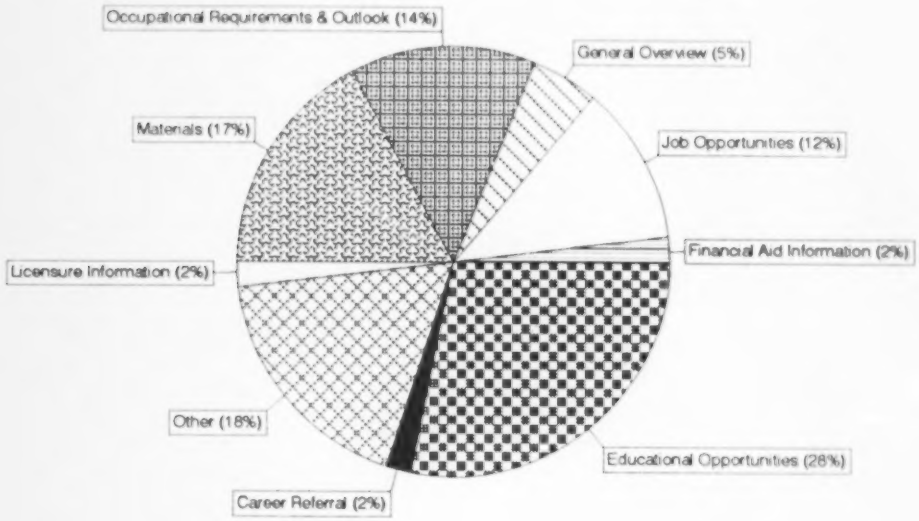
In the United States today, far more people have access to a telephone than a computer. Only 5 percent of American households were without telephones in 1990, according to a recent report from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (Vobejda, 1994). Thus, a hotline like Virginia VIEW's can supply information in an equitable way to almost everyone, regardless of gender, age, disabling condition, economic status, or place of residence.

Sometimes people who are faced with job and career decisions do not know where to turn for assistance, what questions to ask, or how to interpret the information they receive. A hotline operator with good counseling skills can help frame questions and request enough feedback from callers to make sure they receive and understand the information they need. Hotlines also offer their users privacy and relative anonymity. VIEW staff have found that some Hotline clients feel more comfortable about asking for assistance over the telephone, rather than in person, and appreciate the anonymity the Hotline offers them.

Much of the information callers seek is specific and local, the kind that can be given easily by telephone. For example, VIEW has found that callers are apt to seek information about educational opportunities in their local area. Most adults are unable to relocate to attend school, and they want in-depth information about local class offerings. The second most requested information concerns occupational requirements. Callers also seek data on professional associations, state and local licensure information, and job search advice (see Figure 2).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Figure 2: Types of Information Requested



Note: "Other" types of information requested include such areas as apprenticeships, professional associations, and job search skills.

Although the Hotline is statewide, its staff supply information suited to each caller's situation and location. For example, they can provide information on programs and educational institutions in the caller's own community. Callers can obtain basic facts - specific names, addresses and local phone numbers — to help them in finding employment or further educational opportunities. Thus, the Hotline gives the public a convenient and quick way to get answers to many of their career-related questions. It also enables a state agency or CIDS to provide statewide service to consumers from a single office, using minimal staff and space.

Considerations for Hotline Operation

Hotlines can be a valuable service delivery method for reaching consumers directly in the 1990s. Agencies and educational institutions thinking of starting a career information hotline may find the following tips, drawn from Virginia's experience, helpful.

When the Phone Rings

- As in face-to-face counseling, many telephone inquiries show a certain similarity. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that each caller presents a special concern and deserves a response "with a smile."

- Consistency in service delivery is important. Each caller should receive the same courteous and expert assistance. Occasional or random taping of calls can provide quality assurance.

- Hotlines often get calls of last resort. Many times callers have made numerous attempts to find answers to career information questions only to be referred to someone else. A hotline should be the place where questions get answered accurately and quickly.

- Callers who need career counseling must be referred to those who can provide that service. Hotline operators must understand that their function is not to provide counseling but to disseminate career information. They need to know the services available for an appropriate referral.

- Sometimes it is better to mail a caller a prepared handout rather than spend an inordinate amount of time on the phone. Prepared handouts/mailouts of high quality are very useful in responding to common questions that require detailed answers about sources of financial aid, information on health careers, and the like.

- Hotline operators should expect to give technical assistance to counselors and other helping professionals. As budgets are cut, even the best run career center or library may lack some of the most recent reference materials, such as expensive and frequently updated directories that are hotline essentials.

Keeping Information Current

- Constant attention is required to keep the information timely, accurate, and easily accessible. For example, agencies' names and addresses change frequently. Occupational licensure requirements are in a constant state of flux as the workplace adapts to technological change. Unlike print media, hotline updates are immediate.

- Keep in mind that hotline callers themselves will provide an abundance of useful information for CIDS staff. If repeated callers request, for example, more detailed information on environmental careers, then hotline operators should be alert to finding more resources in that area. Subject related, one-page bibliographies can be prepared in many different subject areas to respond to frequently asked questions.

- As budgets become tighter and tighter, and fewer and fewer telephones are answered by human beings, VIEW staff are having a more difficult time obtaining information from original, primary sources. If professional research staff, who expect to dig for data, are frustrated, imagine how the average citizen trying to find information must feel.

Tips from Consumers

For hotline operators, callers provide a wealth of information about employment and education concerns. Sometimes their questions reflect trends in the economy or the labor market; sometimes they lead to new types or sources of information that can benefit other CIDS users. As an integral part of a comprehensive CIDS, the hotline keeps CIDS staff in touch with their customers' perceptions, interests, and needs in relation to the labor market.

Ideas and Recommendations

Virginia VIEW's Hotline could reach an even larger public if its hours of operation could be extended and its services expanded. Other state CIDS, state occupational information coordinating committees (SOICCs), or other agencies may also want to consider how they can use the telephone to provide more information services to the public.

One possibility is to offer a specific community service with a limited time frame. An annual career information call-in, for example, could help alert more consumers to existing services in their state. Professional counseling associations could set up weekend or special days when their members could arrange to take calls at state, regional, or local sites on specific topics, such as financial aid, labor market information, or college selection. This kind of service might be offered conveniently as a part of state and local meetings or conventions. Local counselor organizations could set up special times to receive calls during after-school hours, such as one or two weekday evenings or on Saturday.

Large school districts, higher education institutions, and service agencies could use existing phone lines and staff on flexible hours to take evening (7-9 p.m.) and weekend (1-4 p.m.) calls. This would make it possible for people who work during the day to call in for assistance outside working hours.

Hotlines could expand the types of information they provide. For example, they could supply information on volunteer opportunities, such as those arising through the 1993 Community Volunteer Service Act or other local, regional, or state volunteer programs. Many workers gain valuable career experience and satisfaction through volunteer programs and community service, but may lack information on opportunities in their local area.

Hotline operators could disseminate information on employment opportunities in new businesses created as a result of local or regional economic development opportunities. Or they might offer information on starting small businesses or working-at-home opportunities for populations not usually served by economic development agencies.

Conclusion

In the 14 years Virginia VIEW has operated the Career Information Hotline, it has received over 42,000 calls. Currently over 20,000 calls are entered into the computerized database. An analysis of these calls indicate that the Hotline is a very effective and efficient way to deliver career information, especially with adults. With a toll-free number, the Hotline service is available to everyone in the state, without respect to the caller's economic status, location, or other factors.

Additional materials and assistance are provided callers, whether they are professionals seeking technical assistance or consumers seeking career information for their own use. These services are especially important to adults who do not know where to find answers to their questions.

The telephone remains a widely accepted and convenient way to deliver career information. As more businesses and government institutions use electronic telephone systems to minimize public contact, direct person-to-person services such as those offered by the Virginia Career Information Hotline will be even more valued. In the end, most people want to speak to a knowledgeable, caring counselor who can provide accurate and current information.

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Starting a Career Information Hotline? Experiences and Insights from the Texas SOICC

Caesar Andreas

A Daunting Task

When the Texas State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (TSOICC) was established, the goal of making career information accessible to all areas in Texas — from El Paso to Houston, from the Panhandle to the Gulf — was a daunting prospect. Leaders in education and employment services were concerned about the lack of up-to-date career information available to secondary and postsecondary students, especially in the very rural areas. But developing a viable delivery system for a vast and diverse state was a formidable task.

Various solutions were contemplated, including the idea of establishing a career information hotline. In 1984, the Texas SOICC developed a proposal to deliver career information to counselors and students statewide using a toll-free telephone hotline and printed materials that could be mailed to callers in all corners of the state from the SOICC's office in Austin. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) provided the funds for a trial period of seven months.

When the service was launched, one telephone operator answered the phone, selected appropriate printed materials in response to requests, hand-addressed the envelopes, and put them in the mail. During the first seven months, 41,406 pieces of information were mailed to 2,935 callers. Satisfied with the results, TEA funded another eight months of service. The number of callers increased to 3,400, and 56,000 information pieces were mailed out.

Today the Hotline operation is much larger and more sophisticated; in 1993-94,[1] two bilingual operators, with the help of a new automated system, responded to almost 25,000 callers and sent them approximately 213,000 pieces of information. In addition,

[1] Unless otherwise noted, references to Texas hotline "years" are for a program year (PY) of July 1 - June 30, e.g. "1991-92" refers to the period from July 1, 1991 through June 30, 1992.

approximately 18,000 individuals throughout Texas attended presentations by the Hotline's educational analyst.

The story of how the Hotline grew and what its operators learned in the process is recounted in the following pages. Its growing pains are not over, as the Texas Hotline faces the challenge of paring the budget without impairing the service, and finding new sources of funding and support.

History of the Texas SOICC Career Information Hotline

Today anyone in Texas can get a wealth of career, educational, and labor market information by dialing 1-800-822-PLAN, the Texas Career Information Hotline's toll-free number. Counselors and teachers in schools throughout the state receive materials to use in providing career investigation and career development programs for their students. They also get technical assistance from the Hotline's educational analyst, who conducts workshops and other presentations regularly around the state. But the Hotline started as a relatively small operation.

The initial proposal for the Hotline included the start-up costs for the installation of one toll-free number, employment of a telephone operator, telephone charges, supplies, and mailing costs. It also included costs for a personal services sub-contract for the development of a media marketing strategy. The cost of the program was fixed at $62,000.

When the Hotline began operations in March 1985, the service was designed to be extremely easy for an inexperienced young user. Individuals called the toll-free number and gave the operator their name, address and occupation(s) of interest. Within two to three weeks, a packet of information arrived at their home. Calls placed after five o'clock or on weekends were recorded by an answering machine.

The first full program year began July 1, 1986, and ran through June 30, 1987. That year the Hotline received nearly 8,000 calls and distributed almost 135,000 pieces of information. An educational analyst was employed to promote the Hotline and the value of career information in remote sites throughout the state. He provided valuable "hands on" experience with career information and the decision making process through presentations at schools and conferences. By June 1987, he had conducted presentations at 24 different sites and had spoken to 2,100 individuals.

For the next three years the operation of the Hotline remained relatively unchanged. The number of calls and the pieces of information sent averaged 7,700 and 144,905,

respectively. The lack of growth was attributed in large part to two primary factors: (1) the absence of computer automation and (2) the lack of marketing/promotion. First, the lack of automation created a tedious and time-consuming paper and pencil approach, which significantly limited staff efficiency. Second, although the role of the educational analyst was becoming better known in local communities, a more extensive promotional campaign was required to ensure that the greatest number of school districts were aware of the Hotline service. With almost 1,100 school districts in Texas, the need for greater exposure to the toll-free Hotline service was clear.

New Decade, New Attitude

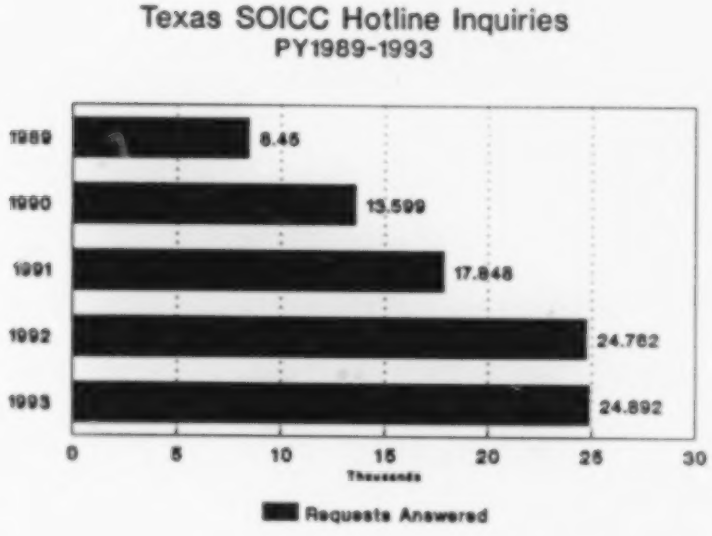
With a new decade came a new attitude. During the summer of 1990, automation arrived. A simple data entry system was created to allow the Hotline operator to enter a caller's information in a computer database. The "bare-bones" system printed labels only; yet it proved to be an extremely efficient process. It allowed the Hotline operator more time to answer more calls. At the same time, SOICC staff created simple promotional flyers to increase awareness of the Hotline. During the fall of 1990-91, the promotional flyers were distributed to every middle school and high school guidance counselor in Texas. The results were obvious at the end of the program year: almost 14,000 calls were recorded, a 61 percent increase over the previous year.

Inspired by these results, the TEA funded an additional Hotline operator position for 1991-92. A more refined data entry system was created and an answering machine capable of taking up to 150 minutes of messages was purchased. These changes proved beneficial, and by year's end the Hotline recorded almost 18,000 calls, an increase of 31 percent over the previous "banner" year.

At the beginning of 1992-93, the Hotline program anticipated yet more growth in the upcoming year and adjusted the operating budget accordingly. Unfortunately, increased funding was not available, and the SOICC was asked to submit a budget slightly lower than the previous year's. Undeterred, the Hotline program proceeded and, despite the decrease in funds, responded to almost 25,000 inquiries, a 38 percent increase over the previous year.

As mentioned earlier, approximately 25,000 individuals called the Career Information Hotline during 1993-94. Initially it would appear that the total numbers, though good, did not grow at the rate of the three previous years. Had the Hotline run out of steam? Not in the least! Its performance was extraordinary considering that its budget was $25,000 less than the previous year. Facing a diminished budget, staff had anticipated a decline. Aware that they would not be able to maintain the momentum of previous

years, the goal became simply to match the previous year's totals without going over budget.



Profile of the Texas Hotline

Tailored Products and Information

The Hotline provides callers with a variety of career information products. Texas SOICC develops, updates, and makes available a wealth of printed materials targeted at students, counselors, and teachers. Among them are the *Texas Job Hunter's Guide*, *Directory of Licensed Occupations and Apprenticeship Program Contacts in Texas*, the *Texas Occupational Handbook*, a toll-free bookmark, and various brochures.

In addition, Texas SOICC staff developed a 12-minute video called Career Succe$$ (released with a packet of supporting materials in 1992). Created for secondary school students, it promotes education and encourages students to use the Hotline. The packet included a copy of the video, as well as a photocopy-ready quiz, a budget assignment, and discussion questions. Judging by written reviews received and direct responses observed, Career Succe$$ has been highly effective with students, especially those at risk, in grades 7 through 12.

Like many other SOICCs, Texas has developed a career information tabloid for Hotline clients and others. This 40-page newspaper on careers in Texas was redesigned and updated in the summer of 1993. Of the initial 75,000 copies printed, 50,000 were sold within two months and the rest were distributed free of charge. The second printing sold equally well and, as of September 1994, the publication was in its third printing.

The Hotline also makes available various career information resources developed by other public agencies and private vendors, such as the Texas Employment Commission's "Pocket Resumé" and "Qualities Employers Like and Dislike." It uses the Guidance Information System (GIS), a computer software program that allows Hotline staff to provide requesters with information on specific occupations.[2] The GIS printouts list a general description for an occupation as well as its average national salary, educational requirements, related jobs, and sources of training. The software provides information on over 1,000 occupations as well as information on every 2- and 4-year college and university in the nation. The information is updated on a yearly basis.

In using GIS, the SOICC provides Texas-specific occupational information for inclusion in the system. The Texas Occupational Information file was created from the occupational characteristics module of SOCRATES, the labor market information system used to support statewide and regional planning activities in Texas. This "cross-fertilization" of data provides a strong thread of consistency across all SOICC data products. Data items include: suggested academic and elective courses for students, current and projected employment, annual average job openings, average hourly wage, related Occupational Employment Statistics code/title, top three industries employing a given occupation, relative opportunity, percent male/female employed in occupation, percent change in employment, and licensing requirements. TSOICC staff work with all member agencies to develop these detailed files for inclusion in all SOICC publications and software.

During 1993-94, a total of 212,826 pieces of career information were sent to requesters. Among the callers were 2,020 educators, who phoned the Hotline to request a teacher/counselor packet containing a copy of all printed materials mentioned above. From 1990 to 1994, a grand total of 772,488 pieces of information were sent to Hotline callers.

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[2] GIS is one of several proprietary systems that states use to deliver career information. These systems offer similar types of information and, like GIS, can incorporate state-specific as well as national information. Systems used in other states are listed in Appendix A.

Principal Hotline Clients

Most of the Hotline promotion is directed towards secondary school counselors, teachers, and students. Thus, it is no surprise that 99.9 percent of all calls made during 1993-94 came from the secondary school population. Although one third of all calls are left on an answering machine, Hotline staff believe that their nature and content leave little doubt that most are from students.

The great majority of callers are middle school and high school students who are instructed by a teacher or counselor (e.g. as part of an occupational investigation class) to call the Hotline and request information on a career area of interest. Typically, students request "well-known" occupations, such as *lawyer, doctor, physical therapist, model, actor, singer,* or *construction worker.* Requests also seem to follow topical events; callers wanted information on *soldiers* during Desert Storm, for example, or *astronauts* during space shuttle missions. For information on occupations not found on GIS, the Hotline operators turn to publications such as the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, and the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles.*

Promoting the Hotline

Promoting and explaining the toll-free service is integral to its success and is an ongoing endeavor throughout the year. The Hotline is promoted through various activities, including an annual promotional campaign, presentations by the educational analyst, and Improved Career Decision Making (ICDM) workshops. More recently, public service announcements promoting the Career Information Hotline have been sent to selected radio stations and newspapers.

During 1993-94, as in previous years, promotional materials were mailed to all secondary school counselors in Texas. The mailing included flyers for counselors, teachers, and students. In 1992-93, the mailing included a large poster as well. In both mail campaigns, packets were sent to a small number of counselors at a time over an extended period. This system proved very successful in controlling the number of callers during any one period and ensured a constant and manageable inflow of requests. Judging by the total number of calls to the Hotline, both campaigns worked.

In the past two years, Texas SOICC has also sponsored the Improved Career Decision Making (ICDM) Workshops. Twenty-three workshops were conducted in the autumn of 1993 in various locations across Texas. Their purpose was to provide secondary school counselors and career investigation teachers with tools to assist students in career planning and decision making. The Hotline service was incorporated into a session on the availability and use of career information resources available in Texas.

The educational analyst's presentations to classroom students or school-sponsored Career Days, conferences for educators, and other meetings and events also succeeded in promoting the Hotline. To maximize time, money, and effectiveness, the custom of random scheduling was replaced with systematic targeting of a specific area. The educational analyst solicits requests for presentations via form letters sent a few weeks before traveling to an area. Schools can sign up for presentations during the scheduled week. Aside from saving time and money, this system gives the educational analyst more time in the office to accomplish other tasks.

The presentations have changed throughout the years. They include props and visuals that stimulate student participation. The sessions usually begin with a discussion on skills and the role they play in securing a good career, followed by a discussion of how much it costs to have a comfortable life. Students offer their views and estimate the cost of food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and other necessities. This exercise shows students the high costs associated with the necessities of life and any material wants they may have. Afterwards, the presentation turns to the Career Information Hotline and the information available through it. Students are also shown the Career Succe$$ video and given promotional bookmarks at the end of the presentation.

Although it is hard to gauge the impact and effectiveness of these presentations, most students have been responsive and highly cooperative. Responses to the evaluation form given to educators have been extremely favorable and provide valuable insight and assessments of the sessions. During 1993-94, 195 presentations were conducted for more than 18,000 students and educators at 75 different sites.

Hotline Budget

The Hotline budget has fluctuated throughout its nine years of operation. The 7-month initial budget (which included start-up costs) of $62,000 decreased to $49,876 for the subsequent 8-month period. The first full program year, which began on July 1, 1986, had a budget of $69,744. The Hotline budget grew steadily over the next few years reaching a high of $250,000 in 1990-91; since then, however, funding has decreased each year. Funding for 1993-94 dropped dramatically to $150,000. Currently, the 1994-95 program year has been funded for only $130,000.

The budget cuts are reflective of policy changes to push more funds down to the local level and reserve fewer dollars for state level projects. In the midst of budget cutbacks, however, the Hotline has maintained its importance as an information delivery mechanism and continues to receive state support. Budget cuts notwithstanding, the hotline has begun 1994-95 with its largest first quarter ever!

Last year's decrease in funding inspired the Hotline to tighten its belt and stamp out all inefficient procedures. Staff reduced the average travel cost of the educational analyst's trips by scheduling them according to geographical locations with numerous sites and minimizing trips to a single site. SOICC purchased only essential supplies and developed most promotional materials in-house.

Equipment

The Hotline operation has been streamlined over the years to enhance its capacity and efficiency. In 1990, SOICC purchased telephone headsets for the Hotline operators, replacing the cumbersome handsets. This made it easier for operators to write down a caller's information or enter it in the computer. The following year SOICC purchased a digital answering machine capable of taking up to two and a half hours' worth of messages and replaced the previous machine, which could record no more than 30 minutes.

In 1992, SOICC staff designed and programmed a new data entry system, CIDSMAIL, in an effort to further expand the operational capabilities of the Hotline. The system has proved to be very efficient, minimizing time and effort in processing requests. CIDSMAIL automated virtually every part of processing requests. As calls are answered, the Hotline operators can designate the type of caller or information requested (e.g. student, counselor packet, tabloid, etc.). This feature enables the operator to find out the types and number of requests at any point in time. The system also prints forms, labels, and letters to individual callers and prepares various reports on inquiries by day, month, quarter, and year. Easy referral to previous inquiries allows the operators to verify that a student has already placed a call and that materials have either been sent or will be sent shortly. This is particularly helpful with student or teacher call-backs. In addition, CIDSMAIL was created for use on a network, so that two or more Hotline operators could use the system at the same time.

Hotline Innovations

As with most projects, the Hotline has experienced highs and lows throughout its lifetime. The most significant difficulty has been the lack of funding. Within the last year, SOICC has taken radical measures to ensure that the Hotline continues to function and to grow. Two of the more extreme steps taken include: shifting from first class to bulk rate mail and selling advertising space in the *Career Success* tabloid.

The shift from first class mail to bulk rate came about during the spring of 1994. The promotional campaign generated a record number of calls. To handle them, Hotline

operators had to divert time from compiling and sending out the information. With the backlog of requests mounting, the SOICC sought alternative mailing procedures.

In January 1994, the sheltered workshop at Goodwill Industries had handled the tabloid promotional mailing and had done an excellent and inexpensive job. During the last week of March, SOICC staff sought Goodwill's assistance and set up a test run for mailing out student packets. Having Goodwill employees stuff, sort, stamp, and mail the student packets cost considerably less than the existing Hotline process. The only drawback was the longer delivery time: 5-8 days for bulk mail, rather than 3-4 days for first class.

During April and May, the new mail system with Goodwill Industries was tested to determine the average costs. The average savings were unbelievable; costs for a student packet decreased by half, from 52 cents to 26 cents. Given the volume of mail, bulk rates would yield considerable savings. The successful pilot project led to a contract with Goodwill Services. Unfortunately, Goodwill recently announced that it is likely to discontinue the sheltered workshops by the end of 1994. Texas SOICC still hopes to use bulk rate mail; however it will probably have to be done in-house.

In another attempt to deal with the continuing budget deficit, SOICC began investigating the possibility of raising funds through the creation of a partnership between the Hotline and private industry. The partnership would involve the sale of advertising space in the *Career Success* tabloid, a major change in policy. The advertisements would continue to emphasize Hotline themes, such as the value of staying in school, but they would also provide company and product recognition.

SOICC data indicated that *Career Success* was read by 200,000 students during the school year. Staff felt certain industries would jump at the chance to expose their messages or products to such a large, distinct group of readers. Revenue generated through this approach would offset the projected shortfalls and underwrite project costs in the future. The educational analyst was charged with developing the materials and running the new project.

Thus far, Hotline staff have prepared a packet for mailing to a selected number of private concerns, inviting them to place an advertisement in *Career Success*. The packet lists publication demographics and advertising rates. It also includes a summary of the SOICC situation, as well as its purpose and goals.

TSOICC first approached universities, technical schools, community colleges, and private colleges; two schools responded to the mailing. SOICC then turned to private foundations and philanthropic companies and got a handful of responses. The next step that SOICC will take is to contact companies selling a product.

Texas SOICC has learned valuable lessons in undertaking this project, and changes are being implemented to ensure that the venture will succeed. In addition to continued wide audience marketing, SOICC staff have been exploring options to enhance the visibility of the Hotline. One proposal is the possibility of using the Hotline as the single point of contact for a statewide promotional campaign for the Texas School-to-Work initiative. Similarly, the Hotline has been proposed as a primary point of contact for those persons seeking the One-Stop Career Centers established within the state. Under both these concepts Hotline operators would identify the local addresses and phone contacts for callers and send additional information relative to each initiative. From a career information perspective, callers could take advantage of the broader brush services offered by the SOICC or be referred to local offices for personal assessment through a One-Stop Career Center.

A Window for the Future

For nearly a decade, the Texas Career Information Hotline has been providing information seekers with a wide range of career, occupational, educational, and labor market information. Thousands of individuals from all regions in the state have received this information free of charge and in a reasonably timely and efficient manner. Yet many more Texans could benefit from the Hotline's services, if funds can be found to maintain and expand them.

The Hotline is the SOICC's window on the world of counselors and students. It is a valuable connection at every presentation and provides reassurance to all SOICC customers that staff are "just a toll-free phone call away." The Hotline serves as the SOICC's primary vehicle for information dissemination. It has changed the way the Texas SOICC does business, expanding its scope and ability to serve a large and diverse public. Thanks to the Hotline, anyone anywhere in Texas can call 1-800-822-PLAN; career information is as close as a telephone.

Appendix A: SOICC Contacts for Career Information

STATE	SOICC CONTACT	TELEPHONE NUMBER	CIDS SOFTWARE
AL	Mary Louise Simms, Director	(205) 242-2990	GIS
AK	Brynn Keith, Executive Director	(907) 465-4518	CIS
AZ	Hugo H. Soll, Executive Director	(602) 542-3871	AZ OIS
AR	C. Coy Cozart, Executive Director	(501) 682-3159	O&EIS
CA	Sigurd Brivkalns, Executive Director	(916) 323-6544	Several
CO	James J. Podolak, Director	(303) 866-4488	CIS
CT	Prudence Brown Holton, Executive Director	(203) 638-4042	
DE	James K. McFadden, Executive Director	(302) 368-6963	GIS
DC	Etta Williams, Executive Director	(202) 724-7237	GIS
FL	Garry L. Breedlove, Manager	(904) 488-1048	CHOICES
GA	Richard Jenkins, Executive Director	(404) 656-9639	CIS
HI	Patrick A. Stanley, Executive Director	(808) 586-8750	CIS/Career Kokua
ID	Charles R. Mollerup, Director	(208) 334-3705	CIS
IL	Jan Staggs, Executive Director	(217) 785-0789	CIS/HORIZONS
IN	Linda Piper, Executive Director	(317) 232-8528	CHOICES
IA	Penelope Shenk, Executive Director	(515) 242-4889	CHOICES
KS	Randall Williams, Director	(913) 296-2387	
KY	Don Sullivan, Information Liaison/Manager	(502) 564-4258	State System
LA	Linda Vandrell, Acting Director	(504) 342-5149	CHOICES
ME	James Nimon, Executive Director	(207) 624-6200	CHOICES
MD	Jasmin M. Duckett, Director	(410) 767-2953	VISIONS
MA	Robert Vinson, Director	(617) 626-5718	
MI	Robert Sherer, Executive Coordinator	(517) 373-0363	MOIS
MN	Carole Fuller, Director	(612) 296-2072	CIS
MS	Liz Barnett, SOICC Director	(601) 949-2240	CHOICES
MO	Kay Raithel, Director	(314) 751-3800	CHOICES COIN/VIEW
MT	Anne Wolfinger, Director	(406) 444-2741	CIS
NE	Floyd Colón, Administrator	(402) 471-9953	CIS

Appendix A: SOICC Contacts for Career Information *(cont.)*

STATE	SOICC CONTACT	TELEPHONE NUMBER	CIDS SOFTWARE
NV	Bob Murdock, Director	(702) 687-4577	CIS
NH	Victor P. Racicot, Director	(603) 228-3349	
NM	Charles Lehman, SOICC Director	(505) 841-8455	GIS
NJ	Laurence H. Seidel, Staff Director	(609) 292-2682	New Jersey CIDS
NY	David J. Trzaskos, Executive Director	(518) 457-3806	
NC	Nancy H. MacCormac, Executive Director	(919) 733-6700	State System
ND	Dan R. Marrs, Program Administrator	(701) 224-2733	CHOICES
OH	Mark Schaff, Director	(614) 466-1109	CIS
OK	Curtis Shumaker, Director	(405) 743-5198	COIN
OR	David Allen, SOICC Director	(503) 378-5747	CIS
PA	Fritz J. Fichtner, Jr., Director	(717) 787-8646	CHOICES
PR	Victor J. Cintrón, Executive Director	(809) 723-7110	OPCIONES (CHOICES)
RI	Mildred Nichols, Director	(401) 272-0830	GIS
SC	Carol Kososki, Director	(803) 737-2733	COIN
SD	Phillip George, Director	(605) 626-2314	South Dakota CIDS
TN	Chrystal Partridge, Executive Director	(615) 741-6451	INFOE
TX	Richard Froeschle, Director	(512) 502-3750	GIS
UT	Tammy Stewart, Director	(801) 536-7806	CHOICES
VT	Tom Douse, Director	(802) 229-0311	O&EIS
VA	Dolores A. Esser, Executive Director	(804) 786-7496	Virginia VIEW
WA	Michael Paris, Executive Director	(206) 438-4803	WOIS
WV	George McGuire, Executive Director	(304) 759-0724	
WI	Sue Gleason, Director	(608) 266-8012	WCIS
WY	Valerie Kaminski, Executive Director	(307) 265-6715	CIS

Note: Career information is available in virtually all states through a variety of public and commercial resources, including computer-based systems. Forty-five states/ territories that have SOICC-recognized computer-based CIDS are listed by name in the last column of this table. California, Connecticut, and New York have several computerized CIDS in operation, but the SOICC has not designated any as the official statewide CIDS.

The Authors

Mildred T. Nichols first worked with the Career Education Project as a counselor before becoming associate director and then director of counseling. Subsequently she directed the Career Counseling Service for the Rhode Island Department of Education until she became executive director of the Rhode Island SOICC in 1978 and the Service became a part of the SOICC. She has taught at Clark College in Atlanta, Georgia, and at the Berliner Wirtsschaftfachschule in West Berlin, Germany.

President Jimmy Carter appointed her to the National Advisory Commission on Adult Education. Three governors of Rhode Island have appointed her to such state boards as the Board of Governors for Higher Education, the Rhode Island Port Authority and Economic Development Corporation, the Permanent Commission on Women, and the Rhode Island Adult Education Commission. She is a trustee of Miriam Hospital and a member of the boards of several non-profit organizations, including Vocational Resources, Inc., the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, and the Community College of Rhode Island Foundation. She also serves on several state planning committees concerned with education, tech prep, and the school-to-work transition.

Carl McDaniels has been a counselor educator at Virginia Tech for over 25 years. In 1979-80 he launched a year of research and development regarding needed career information in Virginia, a project that led to the creation of the Virginia Career Information Delivery System-Virginia VIEW (Vital Information on Education and Work). It is a multimedia CIDS located in more than 1,500 sites in the Old Dominion. Dr. McDaniels is a past president of the National Career Development Association (NCDA) and author of two recent books, *Counseling for Career Development* (with Norm Gysbers) and *The Changing Workplace*, both published by Jossey-Bass.

Mary Anne Knobloch has been user services manager for Virginia VIEW since 1990 and oversees the Career Information Hotline. Previously she was a counselor for 16 years with the Virginia Employment Commission, where she became aware of the crucial need for accurate, up-to-date career information. Additionally she has taught telephone techniques at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center in Fishersville, VA. She received her master's degree in student personnel from Virginia Tech.

Mary Landon-Moore is a doctoral student in the counselor education program at Virginia Tech. She is in the second year of a graduate assistantship as a career information counselor with the Virginia VIEW Hotline. In addition, she received her master's degree in counselor education from Virginia Tech and earned a master's in exercise science from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Gale A. Watts has served as Virginia VIEW project manager since 1989. Her duties include the day-to-day overall management of the project, including the Hotline. She received her doctorate from Virginia Tech. She has published recent articles in the *Journal of Career Development* and *The Virginia Counselor's Journal*.

Caesar Andreas is currently the manager of the Texas SOICC Career Information Hotline Project. Not only does he manage the operational and promotional activities for the Hotline, but he also makes over 100 presentations to students, parents, and counselors every year. Mr. Andreas began his career with SOICC in March 1990 as the Hotline operator. After receiving a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Texas at Austin, he was promoted to educational analyst and then manager of the Hotline service. He is also responsible for the computer-generated graphics and layout work for the Texas *Career Success* tabloid and produced, directed, and acted in a Hotline promotional video.

NOICC Occasional Papers

1. *Occupational Information and International Development: Improving HRD Diagnostics*, John E. S. Lawrence (December 1990)

2. *An Appraisal of NOICC/SOICC Needs for Data from the 1990 Decennial Census*, Richard E. Dempsey (February 1991)

3. *National Career Development Guidelines: Progress and Possibilities*, Juliet Miller, Jane Goodman, Brooke Collison (June 1991)

4. *Career Information Delivery Systems: A Summary Status Report*, Valorie Hopkins, Joyce Kinnison, Eleanor Morgenthau, Harvey Ollis (March 1992)

5. *Occupational Information: The "Blue Highways" of the Labor Market*, David W. Stevens (August 1993)

6. *Skills Standards, British Style: Linking Assessment and Training in the United Kingdom*, Wendy M. Newton (November 1993)

7. *Career Information Hotlines Sampler*, Mildred T. Nichols; Carl McDaniels, Mary Anne Knobloch, Gale A. Watts, and Mary Landon-Moore; and Caesar Andreas (December 1994)

From Pilot to Practice: Strengthening Career Development Programs, Juliette N. Lester, Editor (November 1992). This monograph was co-sponsored by NOICC and the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education.

Remaining copies of these papers are available at cost from the NOICC Training Support Center. Copies of NOICC Occasional Papers are $5.00 each. Copies of *From Pilot to Practice: Strengthening Career Development Programs* are $10.00 each. Please add 10% for shipping and handling. You may send your request for copies with remittance (check, money order, or purchase order) made payable to:

NOICC Training Support Center
Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education
1500 West Seventh Avenue
Stillwater, OK 74074-4364

NOICC Training Support Center

The NOICC Training Support Center (NTSC) coordinates the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee's training programs and conferences on a nationwide basis. NTSC provides the NOICC/SOICC Network with ongoing training capabilities, materials, and a pool of experienced trainers and resource persons for its programs and conferences.

The training center is designed to serve four primary functions in connection with major NOICC programs: product development, communication and coordination, network development and support, and training and technical support.

The NTSC operates through the Oklahoma State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee. The center is based at the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education in Stillwater. The Oklahoma Vo-Tech agency, Oklahoma State University (OSU) Educational Television Services, and the OSU College of Education's School of Occupational and Adult Education combine resources and staff to operate the training center.

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